

Defence Housing Australia prepares for the new housing classification policy

“What I want to know is, how does the new policy affect me?”

On 1 July 2007 there will be a change to Defence housing policy. Defence Housing Australia's (DHA) Managing Director Michael Del Gigante explains.

“The policy will enable us to progressively deliver a greater variety of housing types for ADF members. Also, the standard of housing will be improved, to reflect community standards and to provide a more comfortable standard of living for members.”

“With greater flexibility in acquisition and allocation, we can better account for the changing needs of Defence families,” said Mr Del Gigante.

The New Housing Classification Policy (NHCP) will not impact any ADF members until they move from their current home.

Core components of the current housing system will remain, including:

- Group Rent Scheme (GRS) – one GRS rate for each rank regardless of where you are posted within Australia
- Bedroom entitlement
- Defence policy on subsidising the cost of housing.

“The policy is quite complex but put simply: on 1 July the minimum housing standard will increase to include an ensuite and garage (with the exception of Darwin, where a carport is the minimum). This will be the new minimum standard under NHCP,” said Mr. Del Gigante.



Current minimum standard	New minimum standard from 1 July 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 bedrooms • Storage • Kitchen • Dining • Lounge • Bathroom • Toilet • Laundry • Car accommodation (carport) 	<p>The current minimum standard plus the following additional amenities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuite • Single lock up garage instead of a single carport-except Darwin • Security • Covered outdoor area (from 1 Jul 09) • Minimum size fenced yard of 25 square metres in the Sydney posting location and 35 square metres for all other posting localities (from 1 Jul 09)

The new minimum housing standard will be implemented over a 10 year transition period. This transition period will allow Defence and DHA to renovate and acquire new houses, as required.

Under the new policy, off-base housing that meets the new minimum standard will be classified based on its market rent. To reflect regional differences when classifying houses, Defence will set rent bands across 29 posting locations. However GRS contributions will

be common across the country. The following table is provided for illustration purposes to show possible rent bands for the Canberra region.

Canberra Defence Regional Centre			
RB 1	\$307	to	\$432
RB 2	\$434	to	\$478
RB 3	\$479	to	\$558
RB 4	\$559	to	\$819

Illustration Purposes Only

For example: If a house, that meets the new minimum, is located within the Canberra region and has its market rent assessed as:

- \$350 per week then it would be classified RB1 (falls into rent band 1 for Canberra).
- \$490 per week then it would be classified RB3 (falls into rent band 3 for Canberra).

Under the new policy, houses located on-base will continue to be classified by amenity. An on-base house that meets the minimum standard will be classified RB1 and classification will increase by one for every additional functional amenity.

For example: An on-base house that meets the new minimum, and also has a family room and study will be classified as RB3 (minimum standard plus 2 additional functional amenities)

Current Housing Group	Rank Group Army	Rent Band	Revised Rank Group
A	Corporal and below	1	Corporal and below, Staff Sergeant, Sergeant, Lieutenant and Second Lieutenant
B1	Staff Sergeant and Sergeant		
B2	Captain, Lieutenant, Second Lieutenant, Warrant Officer Class 1, Warrant Officer Class 2	2	Captain, Warrant Officer Class 1, Warrant Officer Class 2
C	Lieutenant Colonel and Major	3	Lieutenant Colonel and Major
D	Brigadier and Colonel	4	Brigadier and Colonel
E	Major General and above	5	Major General and above



“Will DHA be ready?”

“Although many ADF members will not be affected by the NHCP until the peak posting cycle commencing in Oct/Nov, DHA has been busy preparing for its

introduction. To ensure that DHA staff are able to assist members with the new policy, a comprehensive training program has been developed and is currently being implemented,” comments Mr. Del Gigante.

“Before NHCP is introduced on 1 July 2007, all staff will have completed training commensurate to their position, and an assessment, ensuring that staff responsible for managing the allocation of housing and your removal are well prepared.”



Improvements to HomeFind

“The introduction of the policy has provided an excellent opportunity for DHA to rebuild HomeFind. The online site not only has an improved design but has added features and automated processes to make finding a home even easier for members,” said Mr. Del Gigante.

The new product will be accessible from 1 July and will include greatly improved design and navigation, including a whereis.com.au link to assist members in locating nearby schools, hospitals, childcare centres etc.

The upgraded HomeFind will also improve business processes within DHA, in that property classification will now be carried out automatically. The system will also calculate the contribution payable for each house a member views, based on the member's rank and bedroom entitlement and will display the amount on the same screen as the house on HomeFind.

Keeping you informed

DHA understands the importance of communicating the NHCP changes both internally and externally, and has developed a Joint Communications Strategy with Defence.

DHA also continues to work with organisations such as Defence Community Organisation (DCO) and Defence Families of Australia (DFA) to ensure timely and accurate information is communicated to ADF members.

A frequently asked questions (FAQ) booklet has been developed with Defence for any ADF members who would like more information on the NHCP.

The New Housing Classification Policy is designed to deliver improved housing for ADF members and will see an increased number of homes available to the junior ranks. As provider of Defence housing, DHA has been working hard to implement the new policy on behalf of Defence. In the remaining 4 weeks, DHA will continue its change management by providing training to HMC staff, consulting closely with Defence, communicating information and answering queries from ADF members.



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